Mummies by Moonlight

Centuries ago, an ancient civilization used the shifting sands of the Dune Sea to bury its dead. The people could think of no better protection for a tomb than the relentless desert. Over the years, determined tomb robbers scoured the desert and looted the tombs, stripping them of their goods and leaving them to be buried again. Still, some tomb robbers were caught, and most of those were condemned to undeath and set to maintain and guard the remaining tombs. Many of these undead guardians still lie quietly beneath the desert. When the sands shift and uncover the tombs, the mummies go abroad once again.

The ruins these mummies guard lie in a depression ringed by high dunes. Only a few buildings are exposed on the surface; the rest still lie under tons of dry sand. An old mortuary temple with copper-clad doors houses the mummies, and a few of them have set themselves to polishing the metal so that it gleams. For a few minutes each morning, the doors catch the rays of the rising sun and cast a brilliant reflection, but the phenomenon is brief and the blinding desert sun tends to render it invisible from a distance. At night, however, the much weaker light of the rising moon renders a ruddy glow that's visible for several miles.

If the PCs see the light and come to investigate, they can find the temple easily. The guardian mummies, however resent the intrusion. Even if the PCs steer clear, the mummies patrol the area around the ruins, and they'll attack any living things they meet.

The temple's interior has received an *unhallow* spell. The whole place is subject to a *magic circle against good* effect. Turning checks made to turn undead take a -4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus.

The area has no accessible tombs, but the mummies have accumulated a level 9 treasure, made up of equipment left behind by unsuccessful looters over the years. (This is not the first time the shifting sands have uncovered the temple.)

Mummies (8): hp 33 each; see *Monster Manual* page 190. Though eight mummies guard the temple, only four are present at any given time; the other four patrol the surrounding area.

Bringing the Parts Together

If the PCs talked to Calibmennon, the androsphinx from "Not Exactly a Thorn in His Paw," they might have some knowledge of this place. It's possible, too, that the hieracosphinxes from "Birds of a Feather" have visited the temple. The sphinxes were looking for prey, but quickly flew away once they realized there was no fresh meat to be had here. They have left no traces except for a few big feathers.

It's also possible that one or two nomads from "A Taste of Desert Hospitality" escaped from the lamias that have taken over their band (see "A Taste of Desert Hospitality"). The nomads came here looking for shelter, and the mummies killed them. The PCs can get the nomads' story by raising or resurrecting them or by using a *speak with dead* spell. Unfortunately, all these nomads know for sure is that a "voice in the night" has sapped their leader's will and now the band is slowly dying as they drive their flocks through the inhospitable Dune Sea.

Coming in Part 4 of All Adrift on the Dune Sea

Deal with some hieracosphinxes.